



## QAR STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of study was to investigate the effect of implementation of Question Answer Relationship(QAR) strategy on teaching reading comprehension at the third year students of MTsN 7 Aceh Besar. This study employed true experimental in which there were two classes taken as the sample, namely a control group which consisted of 21 students and an experimental group that consisted of 23 students. They were taken through random sampling technique. In addition, the data were collected through quantitative (pre-test and post-test) and qualitative method (*questionnaire*). The result shows that the mean of the post-test score of the experimental group was 73.69, while the mean of the post-test scores of control group is 65.64. By comparing t-test score with t-table score, it shows that the result of t-test was 3.08, while the result of t-table at a level of significance with  $\alpha = 0,05$  was 2,021. It means that t-test score is higher than t-table score. The results indicate that alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. Moreover, the students' responses toward the use of QAR strategy in learning reading comprehension were quite positive(80.9%). Finally, it can be inferred that QAR strategy is an effective strategy in teaching reading comprehension at the third year students of MTsN 7 Aceh Besar.

**Keywords:** *teaching reading, reading comprehension, question answer relationship (QAR).*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Reading is one of the basic skills that must be taught for junior high school students. This is to make students skillful in decoding a message that an information carries out. Harmer (2007) highlights that reading skill has an essential aspect in widening student's knowledge and skill. Therefore, to read means not just seeing and saying a sentence but the pursued goal is getting an understanding. This is a common difficulty faced by students who read a text, unable to take a meaningful message from what they read about.

Reading comprehension means making sense of what you read and connecting the ideas in the text to what you already know (Harmer, 2007). Teachers' teaching strategies are believed as the main factor in students' failure in reading comprehension. Teachers commonly ask students to read individually, read aloud and translate sentences one by one. Moreover, having students make questions based on read texts and then answer them are common reading activities that do not seem to fit in the context of learning reading anymore. This technique leads to a lack of equitable understanding among students; the clever gets smarter and those who do not understand will be left behind. This condition, of course, will affect the students' motivation. In learning, especially English, of course this condition cannot be tolerated.

Besides the technique, inappropriate texts given by teachers is another factor which make students uninterested. There are at least five kinds of the texts; descriptive text and recount text were used in this study. In the standard competencies of curriculum of Junior High Schools, the descriptive text and recount text must be taught in the seventh grade. Descriptive text is a text where the main idea is conveyed by clearly describing the object, place, or event that is the readers' topic. Therefore, readers seem to feel directly what is being expressed in the text. Meanwhile, recount text is a text that retell event or experience in the past. The purpose is to entertain or inform readers.

Based on the problem above, it seems that the purpose of teaching reading will be potentially achievable if teachers apply a proper method. There are a lot of methods and strategies used to increase students' motivation and interest in reading comprehension. One of the learning methods or approaches considered to be able to realize this intention is cooperative learning method. Orr (2006) states that cooperative learning is a method that promotes cooperation among

students to achieve the learning objectives. This method is suitable with the language function as a means of social interaction.

There are various strategies that can be applied in cooperative learning, including think-pair-share debate, problem-based introduction, articulation, mind-mapping, Qar strategy, and so on. In this study, a cooperative strategy to be applied is QAR strategy. This study was conducted to know whether QAR strategy improved reading comprehension of the third-year students at MTsN 7 Aceh Besar.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading can be said as an activity that aims to find, to see, and to understand the contents of a reading or writing. According to Orr (2006), the aim of reading is to obtain the message from the text. The message is conveyed by writers to readers through any medium used. Meanwhile, according to Jennings (1965), reading is a reciprocal relationship between the author's knowledge and the reader's knowledge which is channeled through a powerful interaction process to gain meaning from what is read.

Meanwhile, understanding can be developed through the decoding process of the meaning of messages a reader reads. Through this way, he/she can build up his/her knowledge. Understanding requires an active effort. It is not just reading what is written but more than that to take messages from authors. Ur (1986) argues that understanding is formed through the intense interaction between a text and a reader which creates a mutual interaction process. Smith (2003) concludes that understanding is a performance formed from the interaction of writers and readers through a written medium to enable the transfer of messages between the two. In the other words, understanding is authors' braid of ideas who can be well received by readers so that knowledge is formed.

Reading comprehension is a process that simultaneously explores and builds meaning through interaction and involvement through written language (Nuttal, 1996). Reading comprehension is the process of connecting written material to what a reader has known and wants to know (Alyousef: 2005).

Hancock (1995) classifies levels of understanding into four levels according to one's ability to draw meaning from what he reads. These four levels of understanding are literal understanding, interpretive

understanding, critical understanding, and creative understanding. The literal understanding is the lowest level of understanding because it takes only the meaning of what the text reads. Interpretive understanding is an understanding in which readers try to interpret the messages of the texts read based on their perspective. The critical understanding is an understanding where readers have begun indicating disagreement or agreement with the idea proposed by authors of texts. Of these four categories, the highest level of understanding is the creative understanding in which creative readers do not merely follow ideas proposed by authors, but they also try to build ideas with their previous knowledge.

### **Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Teaching is a complicated process in order to transfer knowledge from a teacher to a student so that it will form a building of knowledge that will affect actions and decision-making within itself. Teaching is aimed at helping students form his or her knowledge quickly and accurately. Aljawi (2010) theorizes that teaching means to establish situations that enable the process of knowledge transfer between teachers and students where the situation sometimes must be manipulated in order to create a situation and condition as expected. Harmer (2007) suggests that teaching is an activity or a process of facilitating learning that aims to help students to get learning goals.

That is why according to Harmer (1998), reading is an active skill that moves the mind. Students should be focused and try to understand the content of the text, not just to the language. Moreover, prediction is a main factor in reading. Also, readers need to fit in tasks with topics. Finally, good teachers exploit the text in full.

### **Strategies in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Pertaining to the strategies in teaching reading comprehension, Richard and Smith (2003) define reading strategies as ways of accessing the meanings of texts. Reading strategies are applied selectively in the course of reading and almost under the conscious control of readers. There are many strategies in reading comprehension.

Chamot and O'Malley (as cited in Bouchard, 2005) divide reading strategies into three categories; *metacognitive*, *cognitive* and *socio-affective*.

1. Metacognitive strategies means knowing what we know or monitoring our own thinking.

2. Cognitive strategies are characterized by making inferences, visualizing, and predicting during reading process.
3. Sosio- Affective Strategies are characterized by cooperative learning and asking questions for clarification.

### **Concept and Categories of QAR**

The QAR strategy was developed by Taffy Raphael in 1983 to help students find source of information when answering reading questions. Promoting high levels of literacy for students is a core responsibility for teachers. It is important to employ certain strategies of reading to help students improve their reading skill and make them more active and interactive in reading class activities. According to Crist (2002), QAR strategy is a questioning strategy that emphasizes a relationship between the question, the text, and the background knowledge of readers.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that question-answer relationship strategy is a teaching strategy that assists students relate their prior knowledge to the information provided in the text.

Moreillon (2007) says that QAR strategy suggests students to classify the questions by the source of their answers. The question could be literal and inferential. Moreover, there are two basic classifications of QAR, known as “In the book” and “In my head”. They can then be broken into four additional categories: *right there, think and search; the author and you and on my own questions*.

Raphael and Au (as cited in Al- Kafarna, 2015) categorize QAR as follows.

1. Text-based questions or “In the book”
  - a. Right there question; The examples of questions are *who is the main charater in this story?, where does the story take place?*. Meanwhile, the steps which may be taken in order to answer *right there* questions are (1) reread, (2) scan and (3) look for key words;
  - b. Think and search questions also help readers find answers in the text. The steps taken in order to answer *think* and *search* questions are: (1) skim or reread, (2) look for important information, and (3) summarize.
2. Reader-based questions or “In my head”
  - a. Author and me Question. The examples of questions are: *“from the tittle or illustration, what might this text be about?”* and the steps to answer *author and me* questions are (1) reread, (2) think

about what you already know and what the author says and (3) predict.

- b. On my own question. The on my own question is the last level question of the QAR strategy which helps readers create their own words to answer the question. The Question starters include: *what if...? how might....?* and *what can....?*. The steps to answer *on your own* questions are (1) think about what you already know, (2) think about what you have already read before and (3) make connection.

### The Procedures of QAR in Teaching Reading Comprehension

Meanwhile, Raphael and Au (2005) suggest some activities of QAR. Such activities can be considered as the QAR framework as illustrated below:

**Table 1. The QAR Framework**

Reading Activities	QAR	Comprehension Strategy	Question
Before reading	On my own	Activating prior knowledge	From the title, what do you think that can connect you to the text?
	Author & me	Predicting Visualizing	What does the text tell you about? What is the text mainly about?
During reading	Author & me	Making simple and complex inferences	How would you describe the mood of the story ?
	Right there	Finding specific information	Who is the main character? How many characters in the text? Where does the story take place?
	Think & search	Summarizing and making simple Inferences	What problem do you find in this story? What are the important events? What role do

			the characters play in the story?
After reading	Author & Me	Distinguishing fact and opinion	What is the author's message? What is the moral message of the story?
	Think & search	Identifying important information	Find evidence in the text to support an argument.

### **The Advantages and Disadvantages of Applying QAR Strategy**

There are some benefits of using QAR strategy in teaching reading. Conner (2006) mentions five primary purposes of QAR in reading comprehension, which are:

1. QAR can help students monitor their own thinking in understanding of the text.
2. It provides the aim for reading the text.
3. It allows students to assess their own thinking in understanding reading text.
4. Readers are encouraged to elaborate and think critically.
5. It helps refute students' perceptions that all answers can be found in the text.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

There were two classes observed in this study; experimental class and control class. The purpose of the experimental group was to measure the effect of the treatment or independent variable upon the dependent variable. While the control group was to control the treatment that could affect the subjects of the experimental group. The research design can be illustrated as follows:

**Table 2. Quasi Experimental Design**

Sample	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental Group	O <sub>1</sub>	X	O <sub>2</sub>
Control Group	O <sub>1</sub>	-	O <sub>2</sub>

Notes:

O<sub>1</sub> = Pre-test  
O<sub>2</sub> = Post-test

X = Treatment (Sugiyono, 2007)

The population of this research was the total number of the third year students of MTsN 7 Aceh Besar in Academic Year of 2017/2018 that consisted of 118 students. They were divided into five classes and taught by different English teachers.

The total number of the chosen samples from the two groups was 44 students. 23 students belonged to experimental group, consisting of 7 males and 16 females, whereas 21 students were selected for control group, consisting of 8 males and 13 females. In addition, chosen groups were tested to see their level of normality and homogeneity. Their pre-test score was analyzed in order to find out whether or not the chosen samples had the same level in reading ability so that the samples could be the representative of the population.

This research was conducted at MTsN 7 Aceh Besar located in Jln. Blang Bintang Lama Km 7.5, Aceh Province. This school has fourteen classrooms; four classrooms for the first grades, five classrooms for the second grades, and the rest five classrooms belong to the third grades. The following is the number of the students and classrooms at MTsN 7 Aceh Besar for each level.

**Table 3. Number of Students and Classes**

No.	Grades	The Number of Classes	The Number of Students		
			Males	Females	Total
1.	VII	4	52	57	109
2.	IX	5	66	54	120
3.	X	5	70	47	118
Total		14	188	158	347

(Source: School Administration 2017/2018)

In this study, there were two kinds of instruments used to obtain the data needed, namely test and questionnaire. The reading tests were used by the researchers in order to know the students' achievement in reading comprehension before and after the treatment of QAR. They were pre-test and post- test. The genres used in pre- test and post-test were descriptive and recount texts. Moreover, the tests were designed in multiple choices which consisted of four passages. The length of the texts was about 7- 10 lines and the number of questions of each text was five. The questions were related to main idea, specific information, word meaning, reference, and inference questions. The time allocated



for each test was 90 minutes. The following is a further explanation for each test

Pre-test was applied to find out the students' competence in comprehending an English text before QAR strategy was implemented. It was given for both experimental and control classes on the first meeting. The students were asked to answer a number of questions in multiple choices based on four passages presented sequentially. The total questions were 20 items with four options (a, b, c and d). Each correct answer was scored 5. If the students could answer all of the questions, they would get score 100, and if they were unable to answer all of the questions, they would get score 0.

The post- test was applied to assess students' achievement after the treatment of QAR. Therefore, the post test was distributed on the last meeting. In post test, both experimental group and control group have the same multiple choice tests. The scoring system used in post test was the same as used in pre- test.

The obtained data were analyzed by the following steps: 1) Marking the pre-test and post-test results of the two classes according to the scoring criteria in the answer key; 2) calculating the average ( $\bar{X}$ ) student learning outcomes that were re pre-test and post-test results of the two classes; 3) calculating standard deviation (SD) of pre-test result and post-test of the two classes; 4) testing the data normality using chi square formula; 5) testing homogeneity of variance; 6) both classes of variance homogeneous were followed by hypothesis testing using the formula  $t$ ; 7) identifying the effect of QAR strategy on reading comprehension skill by using effect size formula.

Mean score was used to investigate the average score of the students. The formula of Means is proposed by Sudjana (2001). Moreover, standard deviation (SD) was used to investigate the variability that appear among research participants (Sujiono (2010). Besides, the normal distribution test was administered. It was used to investigate whether the distribution of pre-test and post-test score in groups were normally distributed or not. Examining homogeneity variance was to determine whether the subjects comes from the population with homogeneous variance or not. The formula used in analyzing the homogeneity variance is proposed by Sudjana (2001). Examining t-test was done to investigate the significant differences between the two means of the two classes. The T-test formula was used if the number of the sample for each group is less than 30 students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Generally, there are two results described in this chapter. They are the result of students' performance concerning with the calculation of paired t-test, and the result of students' performance in improving five sub-skills related to reading comprehension of descriptive text and recount text by using QAR strategy. To present the data, the test results of the experimental and control groups were tabulated separately.

Related to the normality test, for the experimental group (EG) pre-test with the level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) and ( $df = k-1 = 6-1 = 5$ ), it was found that  $\chi^2_{table} = \chi^2_{(0.95)(5)} = 11.07$ . Thus,  $\chi^2_{count} < \chi^2_{table}$ , ( $2.44 < 11.07$ ). It means that the EG was normally distributed. Meanwhile, the result for the pre-test of the control group (CG) as viewed above was  $\chi^2_{count} < \chi^2_{table}$  ( $7.09 < 11.07$ ) which led to the conclusion that the CG also had a normal distribution. Therefore, null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was accepted and alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was rejected.

The homogenous test was meant to examine the quality of certain data.  $F_{count}$  for both of groups was 1.16, while  $F_{table}$  was 2.12. Then, by comparing the result of  $F_{count}$  and  $F_{table}$ , it was found that  $F_{table}$  was lower than  $F_{table}$  ( $1.16 < 2.12$ ). In this case, the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was accepted. The variances of both pre-test in experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) were homogenous. There were no significant differences between the results of pre-tests on the two groups.

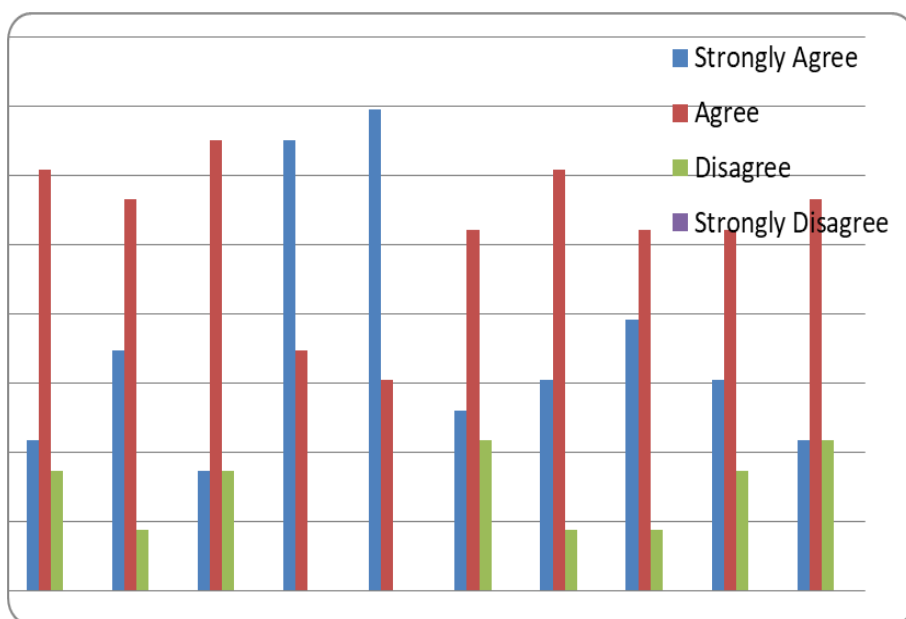
The results of the independent t-test on pre-test of both EG and CG show that the means of the pre-test scores on EG and CG were 57.17 and 56.21, respectively. By using the statistic formula of t-test, it was found that the result of t-test from both groups was 0.29. In this case, the score of t-test was lower than the score of t-table;  $t_{test} < t_{table}$  ( $0.29 < 2.201$ ). Therefore, null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was accepted and there was no significant difference between the result of pre-test on EG and CG. It signifies that EG and CG had similar achievement in reading comprehension.

The results of the independent t-test on Post-test of EG and CG show that by using the statistic formula of t-test, it was found that the result of t-test from both groups was 3.08. In this case, the score of t-test was higher than the score of t-table:  $t_{test} > t_{table}$  ( $3.08 > 2.021$ ). It means that  $H_o$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. This result leads to the conclusion that there was a significant difference in students'

reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using QAR and those who were taught without using QAR activities.

The result of paired t-test analysis (dependent t- test) for EG was 14.52. Meanwhile, the result of t-test for CG was 10.55. However, the result of t-table at the level significance of 0.05 was ( $t_{0,95(42)} = 2,021$ ). It means that the t-test score of EG was higher than t-test of CG ( $14.52 > 10.55$ ). It indicates that there were significant progresses of students' scores in EG rather than students' in CG. As the result, the treatment that was used in EG was effective in improving students' reading comprehension achievement.

The result from the questionnaire related to the student responses toward the implementation of QAR strategy in teaching reading comprehension can be illustrated in the following chart:



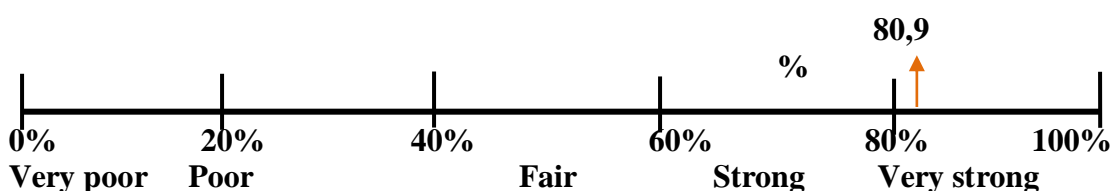
**Chart 1. The Results of Questionnaire**

The data were then statistically analyzed by using Likert scale. The table below shows the analysis results.

**Table 4. The Distribution of Questionnaire Result**

Alternative	Score	Frequency	Total Score	Percentage
Strongly Agree	4	82	328	35,7%
Agree	3	120	360	52.2%
Disagree	2	28	56	12,2%
Strongly Disagree	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>230</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>100%</b>

In line with the total score of interpretation above, figure 4.2 below illustrates the strength of the questionnaire based on Likert Scale.



**Figure 1. The Range of Questionnaire Strength**

Related to the result of analyzing questionnaires, most students (52,2 %) chose the option 'agree'. Nevertheless, 35,7% of them chose 'strongly agree', while 12.2% responded 'disagree' and none of them responded strongly disagree (table 4.8). Subsequently, from Figure 4.2 above, it can be seen that the total score of Likert scale was 744, showing that the interpretation of students' responses was 80,9%. It showed that generally the students gave positive response toward the strategy of QAR used in teaching reading comprehension.

## Discussion

This discussion is based on two objectives of this study to be solved: (1) Is there significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught using QAR strategy and those who were taught through translation strategy? and (2) what were the students' responses toward the implementation of QAR strategy in teaching reading comprehension? The activities of the research were pretesting, teaching (treatment), post testing, distributing questionnaire, and analyzing all resulted data. Thus, the discussion of this study would be about these activities of research.

The first discussion deals with the pre-test given for both groups on the first meeting. In this case, the students of both groups were asked to answer 20 reading questions related to main idea, specific information, word meaning, word references and inference questions. Based on the result of calculation, it was found that for experimental group  $\chi^2_{count} < \chi^2_{table}$  ( $2.44 < 11.07$ ), and for control group  $\chi^2_{count} < \chi^2_{table}$  ( $7.09 < 11.07$ ). It showed that the t- tests of both groups were smaller than t-table. It meant that there was no significant difference between both groups was not insignificant since the t- table exceeded the t- test. These results lead to the conclusion that each group of samples had normal distribution. Both groups relatively had the same initial skill in reading comprehension. Thus, the writer might use them as the sample of research. Additionally, from the analyzing of the homogeneity of both groups, it was also found that both experimental and control groups were homogeneous where the result of the calculation showed that  $F_{count}$  were lower than  $F_{count}$ , that is  $1.16 < 2.12$ . It meant that the treatment of QAR strategy might conduct for experimental group since the students were in the same level of reading competence.

The second discussion concerns with the implementation of QAR strategy. In this case, the treatment of QAR was done for four meetings in experimental group. Each meeting was conducted by following the procedures suggested by Raphael (as cited in Crist, 2002). The class was started by introducing and explaining the students the strategies of QAR which is “in the book” question and “in my head” Question. Then, the teacher demonstrated the QAR strategy using a short reading passage. She gave the examples to train the students using QAR and asked the students to read the text and also the questions. Then, the teacher guided the students how to apply the QAR strategy in order to answer the questions. Furthermore, students tried to use the QAR strategy with their friends in small groups with another text. After they could use the strategy well, they would try to use it individually. Contrary to the experimental group, in the control group, students did some activities, such as reading the text, translating it into Indonesian and doing the exercises. The students did not work on reading questions independently since their reading comprehension was greatly influenced by their teacher’s translation. In addition, during the process of learning, the students of the experimental group who were taught by using QAR strategy looked more attentive and active than the control group.

The next discussion pertains to the post- test for both groups after the treatments. The result of the post-test on EG was 73.69 while the CG was 65.64. The scores' of the EG were higher than the scores of CG. The t- test result was higher than  $t$ -table ( $3.08 > 2.021$ ) indicating that the  $H_0$  hypothesis (*"there is significant result students who were taught reading comprehension by using QAR achieved a better result"*) is accepted. The experimental group students applied the QAR strategy in the process of learning before they took the post-test. These activities helped them to be easier to understand the text as shown by the result of their post-test which was higher than their pre-test. This finding is supported by Armbruster et al, (2003) who claimed that question-answering instruction encouraged students to learn how to answer questions properly. This is also in line with Moreillon (2007) who argued that the use of strategic questions will increase readers' understanding of a situation at the present time based on information or experience of their own thinking.

The last discussion connects with the students' opinion toward the implementation of QAR in reading comprehension. Based on the result of the questionnaire, it was proved that 80.9% of the students in the experimental class had strongly positive perspective on the use of QAR Strategy in reading comprehension. This result seemed to support Stafford (2012) that said QAR assisted teachers and students by providing a common language between teachers and students' questions, providing a framework for answering questions, and providing a framework for comprehension instruction. Raphael, et.al (2006) also mentioned that QAR enhances students to locate and recall information they need and finally they can draw inference and critiques as well.

In line with the research findings above, it can be concluded that the use of QAR strategy as a strategy in teaching reading comprehension was effective to the third-year students of MTsN 7 Aceh Besar in Academic Year 2017/2018.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the data analysis done as described in the results section, it can be said that the students who were taught reading comprehension by applying QAR strategy got a significant increase of score, compared to the students who were not taught by employing QAR strategy. From the application of QAR strategy to reading comprehension, the students

gave a positive response toward the implementation of QAR. The writers encourage teachers, especially English teachers, to apply this QAR strategy as an alternative technique in learning reading; not just for reading comprehension learning but also for other skills of English.

Lastly, for other writers there is still a wide opportunity to research this QAR strategy and hopefully what is presented in this article can bring many benefits to the readers as well.

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